

Message Text

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47

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10

LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03

NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAJ-01 DRC-01

/120 W

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P R 081724Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0188

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

EUCOM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: THE ENGINEERS' STRIKE: A BIZARRE ENDING TO
THE DISPUTE

REF: LONDON 5670 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE ENGINEERS' STRIKE ENDED LATE THIS
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AFTERNOON (MAY 8) FOLLOWING THE ACCEPTANCE BY THE

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COURT OF AN OFFER FROM AN ANONYMOUS DONOR TO COVER DAMAGE PAYMENTS OWED BY THE AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS. THIS ALLOWED THE COURT TO RETURN FUNDS WHICH IT SEQUESTERED. END SUMMARY

2. UNTIL THE COURT DECIDED TO ACCEPT THE ANONYMOUS DONATION (IT HAD PREVIOUSLY REFUSED), THE STRIKE HAD RESULTED IN THE CRIPPLING OF AUTO PLANTS, SHIPYARDS, THE NON PUBLICATION OF SEVERAL NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS, SUSPENSION OF AIR TRAVEL AND WALKOUTS AT POWER PLANTS.

3. THIS SOLUTION - ALMOST THE MAGIC RABBIT IN THE HAT - HAD ACTUALLY SKIRTED THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF THE UNION'S REQUIREMENT TO OBEY THE LAW. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT WAS VERY ANXIOUS TO END THE STRIKE AND THERE WERE SEVERAL MEETINGS BETWEEN SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT MICHAEL FOOT WITH UNION LEADERS IN AN EFFORT TO DO SO, IT HAD VERY LITTLE ROOM FOR MANEUVER IN GETTING THE UNION OFF THE HOOK AND THE STRIKE SETTLED. WITHOUT DOUBT THE GOVERNMENT IS BREATHING A DEEP SIGH OF RELIEF. EVEN IF THIS INSTANT, IF BIZARRE, SOLUTION HAD NOT BEEN FOUND, THERE WERE SEVERAL OBSERVERS HERE WHO DOUBTED WHETHER THE AUEW COULD HAVE MAINTAINED A LONG STRIKE, WHATEVER SHORT-TERM DAMAGE IT MIGHT HAVE CAUSED. HOWEVER, IT DID POINT OUT THE CONTINUING VOLATILITY OF BRITISH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH THE SOCIAL CONT UCT WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY INVOLVED, IF THIS STRIKE WERE TO CONTINUE FOR A LONGER PERIOD IT WOULD HAVE HAD REPERCUSSIONS ON THE OVERALL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LABOR GOVERNMENT AND THE TRADE UNIONS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, COURTS, LABOR STRIKES, LABOR ARBITRATION, CIVIL ENGINEERING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON05735
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740111-1107
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740565/aaaacfpz.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LONDON 5670 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30-Jul-2001 by phillir0>; APPROVED <11 JUN 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE ENGINEERS' STRIKE: A BIZARRE ENDING TO THE DISPUTE
TAGS: ELAB, UK, AUEW, AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005